

The report with reference to the encroachments on the lines of the rivers about the city, which was presented to the Chamber of Commerce yesterday, deals with a very important subject in a thorough and able manner. The facts which it presents should receive the early attention of the authorities. Everyone who has given even a passing observation to the matter has been able to perceive the fact that there have been decided encroachments on the rivers. The report, however, shows them to have been more general along the entire river bank than could have been supposed. Everyone seems to have participated in them. Railroads, bridge companies and manufacturing firms have taken part in the encroachments which are gradually destroying the navigable value of the rivers, and the encroachments are to be found all the way from Sharpsburg on the Allegheny, and Turtle Creek on the Monongahela, down to Verer station on the Ohio.

It is certainly a public duty to support measures which will preserve the rivers, rectify the lines and prevent further transgressions on the river bed. These steps are outlined in the committee's report with the addition of a very valuable suggestion, such as THE DISPATCH has often urged for its value by itself. If the railroads occupying the river bank should be held open for the use of all railroads desiring to cross the city, now or in the future. Such a full presentation of so important a subject should certainly lead to prompt and adequate public action.

NO BOOM YET.

The rather singular argument is advanced to prove that the present rise in the price of iron is not a boom, that the rise is based on a general demand for iron. There was no demand for iron in the booms of 1879 and 1882? The fact is that every such undue advance is caused by a sudden development of demand in excess of the supply which sends prices up until they both check consumption and stimulate increased supply so as to cause an overstock and a rapid reaction of prices. The present rise has not exceeded moderate proportions as yet, and the best protection against a boom is the knowledge that a large capacity of iron production is ready to go into operation if prices advance very little more. There is also a good safeguard in the fact that nearly all goods in the iron trade is desirous of avoiding the dangers of such an advance as would cause a reaction.

A CHICAGO CRIMINAL PUZZLE.

A Chicago grand jury has found indictments against the gang that was trying to pack the jury box, in the Cronin case, with jurors bribed in the interest of the defense. It is probable that the jury in the primary case cannot be completed with safety until the jury fixers in the collateral case are lodged in the penitentiary. But this probability indicates an indefinite succession of cases for jury fixing which places the date for trying the Cronin murderers in the dim future.

Suppose the Chicago courts proceed to the task of making an example of these jury-fixers. Of course the task will involve the same struggle that has been going on in the Cronin case; and by the time that a jury has been fairly empaneled a new lot of jury-fixers may have got in their work on those who are to try the first lot. This involves the postponement of jury-fixing case No. 1 until the jury-fixers No. 2 are convicted. But on their trial a third lot of jury-fixers may rally to the rescue; and so on, until at the close of the century the succession of jury-fixing cases may stretch out to the creek of doom, and the original murder case be lost sight of under the mass of attempts to set up the various juries.

If this sort of thing should go on much longer, it would not be strange for the Chicago people to conclude that the only way to get prompt justice is by an appeal to Judge Lynch.

UNCONQUERABLE BOURBOIS.

Hardly any better proof of the innate disposition toward oppression that lies at the bottom of the Southern "race question" can be afforded than the reply of the Birmingham, Ala., *Age-Herald* to the suggestion of an American society. He thinks it is a shame, the Southern whites, in which the participants are bored exceedingly as a rule, or are simply exhibitors of fine sentiment and shallow brains. Almost all the world will secretly agree with the good Bishop; there are very few indeed who really enjoy this awful social function. And yet Bishop Huntington's proposition to transform the

REFORMING EVENING PARTIES.

Bishop Huntington, of the Episcopal Church, is not satisfied with the "evening party" as they are accustomed to find it in American society. He thinks it is a shame, the Southern whites, in which the participants are bored exceedingly as a rule, or are simply exhibitors of fine sentiment and shallow brains. Almost all the world will secretly agree with the good Bishop; there are very few indeed who really enjoy this awful social function. And yet Bishop Huntington's proposition to transform the

evening party into an instrument for good stands small chance of being carried into effect. It is true, as he says, that "people could get together with a direct intention to improve themselves and one another." But could they improve themselves and those they meet? Their intentions might be the best, and still mutual improvement be out of the question.

Bishop Huntington's reform would be feasible, perhaps, if the habitual party-givers were of different material and bent. Taking them in the mass the sedulous votaries of society are not the brainiest people in the community. They may be good to look at—though many of them are not, they may dress expensively and in good taste, they may be able to speak terms with the fine arts, they may dance well, play euchre and whist, and know when to get up and when to sit down in accordance with the politest rules in vogue, but they very seldom possess brains or know how to use them. To improve evening parties we must educate and reform the people who go to them. A small job that even a Bishop might hesitate before undertaking. It is not fashionable to send missionaries into polite society we know, but there is no denying that there is plenty of room for mission work there.

ELECTRICITY AND SAFETY.

The very natural disquietude of a city so gridironed with electric wires as our own is, produced by the numerous deaths from that cause in New York, obtains another reassurance in the shape of an interview with an electric light official declaring that the insulation of all wires in this city is perfect; that they are all under the most careful and constant inspection; and that they are proved by tests twice every day.

It is to be conceded that the immunity from fatal accidents in this city makes these precautions seem reasonably adequate; and if there is a public assurance that the vigilance will never be relaxed, it is to be hoped that this happy security will not be disturbed. Nevertheless, the statement evokes two comments. The first is that if such precautions as these will secure safety, it sets down the action of the companies in New York in failing to adopt them as criminal negligence, little better than manslaughter. These precautions are with in the reach of every electric light corporation; if numerous lives have been sacrificed by their absence, those responsible for the neglect should atone for it in the penitentiary.

The other point is the authority of no less an electrician than Mr. Edison, that no insulation can make a high tension electric wire wholly safe, either above or below ground. This looks like a sweeping assertion in view of the capacity of the earth to absorb any electric current; but Mr. Edison's statement must certainly have force with regard to over-voltage. His remedy lies in the prohibition of electric tension on the streets of such power as to contain any danger.

If the underground wire does not secure ample safety, as there is here good reason to believe that it does, certainly Mr. Edison's plan for the regulation of electrical tension is the least that can be expected. A device for the benefit of humanity must be turned into an instrument of death, in order to save money for a few corporations.

BOYCOTTS AGAINST COMBINATIONS.

The advance in the rates for natural gas by the companies supplying Erie, Corry, Jamestown and Warren has resulted in a popular movement to secure a universal refusal to take the gas at the advanced rates. In other words, the proposition is to boycott the gas companies, as some of the newspaper advocates of the scheme put it; and the expectation is plainly held out that if the people stand out firmly enough, the gas companies will be forced to reduce their rates.

This method of regulating the price of gas is a natural result of a system of exclusive privileges in the supply. It may be the only immediate remedy within the reach of the people; but it is open to vital objections as a method of placing a check on the exactions of corporations. The first is that when the union of thousands of consumers is pitted against that of a single corporation the former is at a disadvantage. Some of the thousands will give in before the corporation does, and the union being broken, the rest will follow like sheep. If there were competing companies, the union of consumers, to transfer their patronage to the company that would first make cheap prices, might be effective; but the chance of thousands against a concentrated corporation is rarely such as to win victory.

Another main objection is that the method of settling the price of a staple by a test of power does not base the price on the legitimate foundation of the cost of furnishing it, but on the opinion of the strongest side. The proper price for gas, as for anything else, is the cost of delivering it to the consumer, including a fair return on the bona fide investment. This is always unerringly fixed by free competition; but it can never be fixed by contests such as are proposed in the Northwestern Pennsylvania towns. The tendency to fix prices by a series of gigantic strikes, is a natural outgrowth of the combination system. In no respect is the abnormal and injurious effect of that system plainer than in this.

Chicago still continues to be the central point of treason in the United States. Traitors come to gravitate naturally toward Chicago, as they are allowed to plot and spot treason there with very little interference. On Sunday, at a meeting of so-called Socialists the stars and stripes were bisected, while the red flag of anarchy was cheered to the echo. About a thousand men and women joined in this disgraceful demonstration, and a lovely Russian by the name of Sergius E. Shevitch made a bloodthirsty address, in which he congratulated Chicago on the probability of its becoming the Paris of the red state which infested the White House. The President is trying to drive the rats away. Major Ernest, the new Superintendent of Public Buildings and grounds, has made a clean out of the entire building of rats. The contract allows Mr. Homer \$30 a day, with the understanding that he is to be paid in the work of extermination, and the work is to proceed until it is completed, it takes all winter, the Government to pay for all the losses of ferrets.

Wilford Woodruff, the President of the Mormon Church, was born in Connecticut 32 years ago. He has the compact build figure of a giant. In the face, the strong nose and the set of the eyes there are reminiscences of the old Commander sufficiently strong to make strangers comment upon the likeness.

A CONTRACT TO KILL RATS.

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AGRICULTURAL PLAGIARISM.

From the Baltimore American. It is now known that successful and hitherto unsuspected farmers crib the stores of their corn magazines from nature's cereals.

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